Why It Matters
A study of the cultural geography of Latin America will introduce the tremendous ethnic diversity of this region. It highlights how history and the blending of native and imported cultures have influenced how people live in Latin America.

Section 1: Mexico
The characteristics and distribution of cultures influence human systems. Mexico has been shaped by the civilizations of the Maya and the Inca, and by the Spanish.

Section 2: Central America and the Caribbean
Culture influences people’s perceptions of places and regions. Native American, European, and African cultures have influenced Central America and the Caribbean.

Section 3: South America
The characteristics and distribution of human populations affect physical and human systems. South America has been influenced by Native American and European cultures, migration, physical geography, and urbanization.

Carnival in Río de Janeiro, Brazil, displays the diverse cultures of Latin America.
Summarizing Information  
Make a Folded Table to help you summarize information about the cultural geography of the subregions of Latin America.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 9</th>
<th>Population Patterns</th>
<th>History and Government</th>
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<td>Mexico</td>
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Reading and Writing  
As you read the chapter, write notes about the population patterns, history and government, and culture of the subregions of Latin America. Summarize this information in the appropriate places in the table.
Mexico

Thousands of years ago, the descendants of Mexico’s first inhabitants developed great civilizations. Over the centuries, there has been a blending of different ethnic groups, which is reflected in Mexico’s present-day population. Many of the unique characteristics and traditions of Mexico’s early civilizations, however, remain a vital part of the country’s cultural geography today.

Voices Around the World

“Every March during the spring equinox at the ancient Maya ruins of Chichén Itzá, the plumed serpent god Kukulcán takes shape from light and shadow and descends the side of the great pyramid El Castillo. People come from all over the world to witness this event, which marks the renewal of the cycle of life on what many archaeologists believe is the Maya calendar constructed in stone. It also serves as a reminder of a great culture.”


Guide to Reading

Section Preview
Mexico has been shaped by ancient civilizations of native peoples and by Europeans.

Content Vocabulary
- indigenous (p. 217)
- mestizo (p. 217)
- urbanization (p. 217)
- megacity (p. 217)
- primate city (p. 217)
- glyph (p. 218)
- chinampas (p. 218)
- conquistador (p. 219)
- viceroy (p. 219)
- caudillo (p. 219)
- syncretism (p. 219)
- malnutrition (p. 220)
- mural (p. 220)
- mosaic (p. 220)
- extended family (p. 220)

Academic Vocabulary
- external (p. 217)
- internal (p. 217)
- predict (p. 218)

Places to Locate
- Mexico (p. 217)
- Yucatán Peninsula (p. 217)
- Mexico City (p. 217)
- Tenochtitlán (p. 218)

Reading Strategy
Categorizing As you read, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by listing the reasons why many people migrate from rural areas to urban areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Internal Migration</th>
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Maya ruins of Chichén Itzá
Population Patterns

**MAIN Idea** Ethnic groups, migration, and urban growth have shaped population in Mexico.

**GEOGRAPHY AND YOU** What factors influence ethnic diversity in the United States? Read to learn how ethnic diversity has shaped Mexico’s population.

In *Mexico*, as in other Latin American countries, the ancestors of Native Americans were the first people to settle the region. For this reason, Native Americans today are known as *indigenous* (ihn•DIH•juh•nuhs) peoples, or peoples descended from an area’s first inhabitants.

**The People**

Mexico’s first inhabitants probably migrated from Asia 40,000 to 60,000 years ago. Because these first peoples were isolated from one another for centuries, they evolved into their own cultural groups and developed highly organized civilizations. These indigenous groups thrived in different areas, such as the Maya in the *Yucatán Peninsula*. The majority of these groups, however, lived in the southern part of the Mexican Plateau—the center of the Aztec Empire.

With the arrival of European settlers over the centuries, a blending of peoples of Native American and European descent created a new ethnic group called *mestizo*. In Mexico today, mestizos make up the largest part of the population.

**Density and Distribution**

With 107 million people, Mexico is the world’s most populous Spanish-speaking country. A population density of 142 people per square mile (54 per sq. km) suggests a relatively uncrowded country. This figure is only an average, however. In *Mexico City*, more than 19 million people live within an area of 597 square miles (1,547 sq. km). That makes its population density 30,150 people per square mile (11,641 per sq. km)!

Migration has shaped Mexico’s population. The desire for job opportunities and improved economic conditions drives *external* migration to other areas of the world. *Internal* rural-to-urban migration has greatly changed the population distribution, with approximately 75 percent of the population now living in cities. People migrate to urban areas because of limited agricultural land and lack of access to social services. Many migrants move to cities along the U.S.-Mexico border. However, Mexico City remains the primary destination for most people who move within the country. This one-way migration from rural to urban areas results in ongoing, rapid *urbanization*—the migration of people from the countryside to cities and the natural population growth within urban areas.

**Urban Areas**

In some Latin American countries, growing cities have absorbed surrounding cities and suburbs to create *megacities*, cities with more than 10 million people. The region’s largest megacity is Mexico City, with a population of more than 19 million. By 2015, the city is expected to grow to 20.6 million people. Because of its size and influence, Mexico City is a *primate city*, an urban area that dominates its country’s economy, culture, and political affairs.

**Reading Check** Migration What two migration patterns have changed Mexico’s population?
History and Government

MAIN Idea Native American empires and colonial rule influenced Mexico’s political and social structures.

GEOGRAPHY AND YOU What U.S. people played key roles in the early history of the country? Read to learn about Mexico’s history and the influence of the Maya and Aztec civilizations.

In Mexico today, as throughout Latin America, people struggle with unresolved issues rooted in the past.

Native American Empires

Centuries before Europeans arrived in the Americas, two Native American empires—the Maya and the Aztec—flourished in the area that is present-day Mexico. These civilizations left enduring marks on Mexican history and culture.

The Maya dominated southern Mexico and northern Central America from about A.D. 250 to 900. They established many cities and built terraces, courts, and temples. Priests and nobles ruled the cities and surrounding areas. The Maya based their economy on agriculture and trade.

Skilled in mathematics, the Maya developed accurate calendars and used astronomical observations to predict solar eclipses. They made glyphs, picture writings carved in stone, on temples to honor their gods and record history.

For reasons that are still a mystery, the Maya eventually abandoned their cities. Archaeologists have uncovered the ruins of more than 40 Maya cities. However, most of the glyphs remain untranslated. Descendants of the Maya still live in villages in southern Mexico and Central America, where they practice subsistence farming.

The Aztec civilization arose in central Mexico in the A.D. 1300s. Their capital, built on an island in a large lake, was named Tenochtitlán (tay•NAWCH•teet•LAHN). Today, it is the site of Mexico City. To feed the growing population, Aztec farmers cultivated all available land. They grew crops on chinampas—floating “islands” made from large rafts covered with mud from the lake bottom.

The Aztec developed a highly structured class system headed by an emperor and military officials. High-ranking priests performed rituals to win the favor of the gods. At the bottom of Aztec society were the largest group—farmers, laborers, and soldiers.

Culture

The Arts

Diego Rivera is known for his wall paintings and frescos, or large paintings done on wet plaster. He used his art to illustrate Mexico’s history and culture. In the central arch detail from his fresco From Conquest to 1930, Rivera uses images of peasants and workers to show foreign influence and Mexico’s struggle for independence. This fresco is one in a series Rivera painted inside the National Palace in Mexico City depicting Mexico’s history from Native American civilizations to just after Mexican independence.
An Independent Nation

The Aztec Empire was still expanding when Spanish explorers landed on the Yucatán Peninsula in 1519. Desiring wealth from Mexico’s abundant resources of silver and gold, Spanish conquistador, or conqueror, Hernán Cortés defeated the Aztec in 1521 and claimed Mexico for Spain. For the next three centuries, Mexico was part of the viceroyalty of New Spain. It was governed under a highly structured political system by royally appointed officials known as viceroys.

In the late 1700s, resentment against European rule spread throughout Mexico and the rest of Latin America. The first Spanish-ruled country in Latin America to win independence was Mexico. A parish priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo, led Mexico’s independence movement in 1810. After a long struggle, Mexico became independent in 1821.

In spite of its independence, Mexico’s political and economic power remained in the hands of a small group of wealthy landowners, army officers, and clergy. Power struggles, public dissatisfaction, and revolts led to a chaotic situation in the new republic. It was during this time that a new kind of leader emerged—the caudillo (kow•DEE•yoh), or dictator. With the backing of military forces and wealthy landowners, caudillos became absolute rulers.

A new constitution in 1917 brought reforms and established Mexico as a federal republic with powers separated into three branches—executive, legislative, and judicial. A president is elected to a single six-year term. Beginning in 1929, however, one political party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), dominated the presidency and Mexican politics for nearly 70 years. The PRI’s control ended in 2000 when Vicente Fox of the opposition party Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) won the election. The 2006 presidential election ensured PAN’s continued control of the presidency when Felipe Calderon was declared the president-elect.

Struggles for additional reforms and political power continue. Native Americans, farmers, and workers continue to pressure the government for greater inclusion in the political system.

Culture

MAIN Idea The arts, traditions, and beliefs of indigenous peoples and of Europeans have influenced Mexican culture.

GEOGRAPHY AND YOU Do you know of any cultural traditions that are unique to Mexico? Read to learn about the culture of Mexico.

The culture of Mexico is an intricate blending of indigenous and Spanish influences.

Language and Religion

In Mexico, the official language is Spanish, which is spoken by more than 95 percent of the population. More than 50 indigenous languages, however, are still spoken by some. Nearly 90 percent of Mexico’s population is Roman Catholic, although many indigenous peoples retain their traditional religious beliefs. Some indigenous peoples blend traditional Maya beliefs and Roman Catholic beliefs. This blending of beliefs and practices is called syncretism.

Education and Health Care

Education varies greatly in Mexico. Most public schools are in rural areas, but do not have the funding or qualified teachers of urban or private schools. Government promotion of adult literacy and funding for more schools has helped Mexico make gains in education.

The Day of the Dead, a festival honoring loved ones who have died, has its origins in Aztec traditions.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Place What other elements of Mexican culture have Native American influences?
As employment and education improve, health problems linked to poverty, lack of sanitation, and malnutrition—a condition caused by a lack of proper food—decrease. The federal government subsidizes health care, making it available to all citizens. However, the poor quality of public medicine causes many people to seek treatment in cities or other countries.

The Arts

Influences of indigenous cultures and the Spanish colonial period are evident in Mexico’s arts. Early Native American architecture includes Maya pyramids and Aztec temples and palaces. Some of these buildings were decorated with **murals**, or wall paintings, and **mosaics**, pictures or designs made with colored stone or tile. The Spanish built churches and other buildings reflecting classic European architectural styles.

The twentieth century brought a renewed interest in precolonial history and culture. Diego Rivera painted murals of indigenous cultures and events in Mexico’s history. Other noted Mexican artists include Frida Kahlo and José Clemente Orozco. The country’s past and cultural identity have inspired writers Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes. Ballet Folklórico fascinates audiences by performing Native American and Spanish dances.

Family Life

Mexicans highly value the family. Each person is part of an extended family that includes great-grandparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins as well as parents and children. Parents and children often share their home with members of the extended family. Compadres, or godparents, are chosen by the parents to sponsor their new baby and watch over his or her upbringing.

As in other Latin American societies, Mexican society still displays elements of machismo, a Spanish and Portuguese tradition of male supremacy. However, women have made rapid advances in recent decades.

Sports and Leisure

Spectators crowd into arenas to watch bullfighting, Mexico’s national sport. People are also passionate about **fútbol**, or soccer. Baseball and jai alai (HY•ly), a game much like handball, have a large following as well.

One of the most popular leisure activities in Mexico may be celebrating. From friendly gatherings to special family dinners, religious feast days, and patriotic events, almost any social occasion is a party—a *fiesta*, or festival.

**SECTION REVIEW**

1. Explain the significance of: indigenous, mestizo, urbanization, megacity, primate city, glyph, chinampas, conquistador, viceroy, caudillo, syncretism, malnutrition, mural, mosaic, extended family.
2. How have ethnic groups, migration, and urban growth shaped the population in Mexico?
3. Which ethnic group makes up the majority of Mexico’s population?
4. Describe the influence Native American empires and European colonial rule have had on Mexico’s political and social structures. Give examples.
5. Create a chart like the one below to help identify how the arts, traditions, and beliefs of indigenous peoples and of Europeans have influenced Mexican culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Peoples</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
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6. How have ancient civilizations of native peoples and European settlers shaped Mexico’s cultural geography? Give examples.
7. Summarizing Information Describe the factors that have influenced population patterns in Mexico.
8. Analyzing Visuals Study the graph on page 217. What generalization could you make about population growth in Mexico?
9. Expository Writing Write a paragraph suggesting suitable locations for constructing new cities to relieve population pressures that exist in Mexico City. What kinds of resources are required to sustain large populations?
Central America and the Caribbean

Island countries such as Cuba and Trinidad reflect in miniature the ethnic diversity that characterizes many parts of Central America and the Caribbean. In other locations, however, a majority ethnic group gives the population a strong cultural identity, with smaller groups adding their own unique flavor to the ethnic mix.

Voices Around the World

“Cuba is truly a melting pot, where Caribbean, African, and European stock mix and match in apparent harmony. Statistics bear that out: Over half of all Cubans are of mixed racial heritage, an astounding proportion by U.S. norms.”

Population Patterns

**MAIN Idea** Diverse ethnic groups, migration, small land areas, and rapid growth have shaped the population of Central America and the Caribbean.

**GEOGRAPHY AND YOU** What factors influence settlement in the United States today? Read to learn about the factors that influence population and settlement in the Caribbean.

The population of Central America reflects the dominant influences of indigenous peoples and Spanish settlers. In the Caribbean, a blending of indigenous groups with diverse influences of Spanish, English, French, African, Dutch, Indian, Chinese, and others has shaped the population.

**The People**

The first inhabitants of Central America and the Caribbean were indigenous peoples. Today, people of Maya descent make up about half of the indigenous population of Guatemala. In contrast, the majority of people in Costa Rica are of European descent. Overall, at least two-thirds of Central Americans are mestizos.

Millions of European immigrants have made the Caribbean their home. Africans first arrived as enslaved people, brought forcibly by Europeans. Slavery ended in the region by the late 1800s, but many Africans whose families had lived in Latin America for generations remained. In the Bahamas, for example, a majority of the population is of African descent. Other parts of the Caribbean have experienced a blending of different ethnic groups. For example, in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, people of mixed African and European descent form a large part of the population.

**Density and Distribution**

In Central America, most people live in the highlands along the Pacific coast. However, population densities vary. For example, Guatemala’s population density of 302 people per square mile (117 per sq. km) is nearly ten times that of Belize, with 33 people per square mile (12 per sq. km).

The average population density of Central America contrasts sharply with that of the Caribbean. Caribbean countries combine small land areas with large populations that tend to grow at rapid rates. These factors make the Caribbean countries some of the most densely populated in Latin America.

A substantial increase in external migration has occurred over the past 100 years. Since the 1970s, large numbers of people have been leaving Central America and the Caribbean to seek better economic opportunities and to escape civil wars and unstable political situations.

Internal migration throughout Central America and the Caribbean has increased urban growth. Today, about 60 percent of the people live in towns and cities. The majority of the urban population lives in capital cities and port cities.

**Urban Challenges**

Although people migrate to cities to find a better life, they often do not find what they seek. As a city’s resources are strained by rapid population growth, jobs and housing become scarce. Such strain can also cause the collapse of a city’s infrastructure, depriving people of necessary basics such as electricity and drinking water. Despite disappointments, most rural migrants do not have the money to return to their villages. They remain in the cities, forced by poverty to live in neighborhoods with substandard housing and poor sanitation.

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**Movement**

Where does the majority of the subregion’s urban population live?
The arrival of Christopher Columbus in the West Indies triggered the eventual conquest and colonization of Central America and the Caribbean.

**European Conquests**

Columbus’s voyages from 1492 to 1504 led to Spanish exploration and colonization of the Caribbean islands. The first permanent European settlement was founded on the island of Hispaniola in 1493. Large numbers of Spanish settlers later arrived seeking gold.

The Spanish easily conquered the Native Americans and forced them to work in gold mines and on plantations. By the mid-1600s, hard labor, starvation, and European diseases had nearly wiped out the Native Americans. In response to the drastically reduced numbers of Native Americans, the European colonists imported enslaved Africans to meet the labor shortage.

**The Columbian Exchange**

Columbus’s arrival in the Americas also set off one of the most significant events in world history—the Columbian Exchange. This movement of plants, animals, and infectious diseases between Europe and the Americas began as Europeans claimed lands in the Americas for Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain.

Some of the exchanges were intentional. Europeans introduced food plants and domesticated animals to the Americas in an attempt to “Europeanize” the region. Europeans also took food crops native to the Americas back across the Atlantic Ocean. The unintended transmission of infectious diseases had serious and long-lasting effects on the peoples and cultures on both sides of the Atlantic.

**History and Government**

**MAIN Idea** History and government in Central America and the Caribbean have been influenced by indigenous cultures, colonialism, slavery, and struggles for freedom.

**GEOGRAPHY AND YOU** What makes your community appealing to new residents? Read to learn about the factors that influenced European settlement of this subregion.

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**The Americas to Europe**

- Plants: potatoes, beans, maize, tobacco, tomatoes, cacao
- Animals: llamas, turkeys, alpacas, guinea pigs
- Diseases: syphilis

**Europe to the Americas**

- Plants: wheat, oats, rice, sugarcane, coffee, grapevines
- Animals: horses, cattle, swine, sheep, goats, chickens
- Diseases: smallpox, influenza, measles, yellow fever, malaria

**MAP STUDY**

1. **Movement** What unintended transfer from Europeans had a detrimental effect on the indigenous population of Latin America?
2. **Regions** What grains were brought to the Americas by Europeans?

Use StudentWorks™ Plus or glencoe.com.
Except for Haiti, Caribbean countries were the last territories in the region to achieve independence. Cuba, for example, won its independence from Spain in 1898, but remained under the protection of the United States until 1902. British-ruled islands, such as Jamaica and Barbados, did not gain independence until well into the 1900s. Even today, some islands remain under foreign control. Puerto Rico and some of the Virgin Islands have political links to the United States. In Central America, Spain ruled until the nineteenth century.

However, struggles for independence ushered in a period of political and economic instability. During the 1800s, some leaders wanted to build political institutions and prosperous economies. In 1823, independent Central American provinces formed a federation called the United Provinces of Central America. The powerful elites opposed such a union, so the United Provinces separated into five separate countries—Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

## Movements for Change

During the 1900s, many countries in Central America and the Caribbean experienced dramatic political, social, and economic changes. For example, after Panama became an independent country in 1903, the United States and Panama signed a treaty creating the Panama Canal Zone. The formation of industries, the building of railroads, and the expansion of trade brought new wealth to the upper classes. However, for the vast majority of people, especially those living in rural areas, progress was limited, and demands for reform were ignored.

Reform did occur in Cuba, however, when a revolution in 1959 set up a communist state under Fidel Castro. During the 1990s, communism remained entrenched in Cuba, but military dictatorships gave way to democratically elected governments in several other countries. Today, many countries in Central America and the Caribbean are struggling to end corrupt politics and violence and bring economic benefits to all their citizens. In critical elections throughout Latin America in 2005 and 2006, people exercised their right to vote and demanded change.

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**Passage Through Panama**

Explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa was the first to grasp the unique geographic features of the land known today as Panama. While exploring the isthmus, he climbed a peak and discovered a body of water as vast as the Atlantic Ocean. Centuries later, thoughts turned to building a waterway that would create a shortcut between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In 1904, final construction on the Panama Canal began. Nearly 75,000 laborers from around the world built what is regarded as one of the engineering wonders of the world. The canal continues to be an important trade route.

**Gaining Independence**

In the late 1700s, Native Americans and Africans yearned for freedom from slavery and European rule. François Toussaint-Louverture (frahn•SWAH•TOO•SAN•LOO•vyoo•tyur), a soldier born to enslaved parents, led a revolt of enslaved Africans in Haiti. By 1804, Haiti had won its independence from France. Haiti went on to help independence movements in other Latin American countries.

**Student Web Activity**

Visit the World Geography and Cultures Web site at glencoe.com and click on Student Web Activities—Chapter 9 for an activity about the Panama Canal.

**Place** Who led a revolt and helped Haiti gain its independence?
The culture of Central America and the Caribbean has been influenced by the arts as well as the traditions and beliefs of indigenous peoples, Africans, and Europeans.

Language and Religion

Spanish is the primary language of most countries in Central America. In the Caribbean, European languages spoken include English, Spanish, French, and Dutch. However, each country has its own dialects, or forms of a language unique to a particular place or group.

Millions of people speak Native American languages. Many people are also bilingual, while others speak one of many forms of patois (PA•twah), dialects that blend indigenous, European, African, and Asian languages. For example, Haitian Creole has a vocabulary based in French with other words of African and Spanish origin.

In Central America, six out of seven people are Roman Catholic. In the Caribbean, most people living on the Spanish- and French-speaking islands are also Roman Catholic. Various forms of Protestant Christianity are found in English-speaking areas. Other faiths in the subregion include Hinduism and Islam. Scores of traditional Native American and African religions also thrive, often mixed with Christianity and other faiths. These mixed religions include Santería in Cuba and voodoo in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Education and Health Care

The quality of education varies greatly from country to country as well as within rural and urban areas of each country. Children generally are required to complete elementary school, but many do not because of long distances to school and lack of money for clothing and supplies.

Communism has had a profound effect on the culture and development of Cuba. In a communist country, the government controls most aspects of daily life.

Did you know . . .

- English is a required course in Cuban secondary schools and is important to Cuba’s tourist industry.
- Students attend school Monday through Saturday and are required to wear a uniform.
- School attendance is required between the ages of 5 and 12.
- Cubans have two surnames—one from their mother and one from their father. The mother’s family name comes last, but people are commonly referred to by their father’s name.
- Dining in restaurants is too expensive for most Cubans. With the exception of restaurants run out of private homes, all restaurants are owned by the government.
- The buying and selling of homes is strictly prohibited. Cubans can only purchase homes directly from the government or swap homes with other residents.
Health care is linked to standards of living. Countries with a highly developed welfare system have better standards of living and high life expectancies. By contrast, countries with less-developed economies have little money to spend on health care. Consequently, disease and malnutrition are more prevalent and life expectancy is low.

The Arts

Native Americans produced the earliest art forms—woodcarving, pottery, metalwork, and weaving. The work of contemporary artisans is matched only by the sophisticated metalwork from the pre-Columbian era, the time before the arrival of Columbus. The handwoven textiles produced in villages throughout Guatemala today reflect ancient Maya symbols and weaving techniques.

Music combines Native American, European, and African influences to create unique musical styles and dances. Styles evolved from the music traditions of indigenous wind and percussion instruments; European string instruments; and African drums, rhythms, and dances.

Family Life

As in Mexico, the extended family is important in the subregion. Throughout Central America, the family is the basic unit of society, and the importance of one’s family in a community is a factor that determines one’s social class. In the Caribbean the structure of the family is often matriarchal, or ruled by a woman such as a mother, grandmother, or aunt. This type of family structure is characteristic of West Africa, from where many people in the Caribbean trace their roots.

Sports and Leisure

Baseball, basketball, and volleyball have large followings, especially in the Caribbean. Over a hundred years ago, American sailors in Cuba taught the game of baseball to the Cubans. From there, as Cubans migrated to other places in the Caribbean, baseball spread throughout the region. In the Dominican Republic, beisbol, or baseball, has become the national passion.

Critical Thinking

6. How has African culture influenced the cultural characteristics of the Caribbean? Give examples.

7. Identifying Cause and Effect What urban challenges have been caused by the migration of many people in Central America and the Caribbean to capital cities and major ports in the subregion?

8. Analyzing Visuals Study the circle graph on page 222. Which ethnic group makes up the majority of the population in the Caribbean? Why do you think this is so? What other groups have large populations in this subregion?

Writing About Geography

9. Narrative Writing Write a paragraph describing the series of events that led to the exploration, conquest, and colonization of Central America and the Caribbean and the role geography played in these events.

Population characteristics

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<th>Examples</th>
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<td>Migration</td>
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<td>Small land areas</td>
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<td>Rapid population growth</td>
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South America’s diverse population is the result of centuries of blending among hundreds of indigenous groups, Spanish, Portuguese, and Africans. Some areas in South America are a microcosm of these diverse cultures. In other areas—many of them remote and isolated—indigenous peoples live much as their ancestors did hundreds of years ago, untouched by the influence of other cultures.

**Voices Around the World**

“...[A]s close as we South Americans feel to one another, we also sense a strangeness. The mountains have been boundaries, allowing different cultures to grow up in proximity. ... Closely identifying with European cultures, Chileans and Argentines view the Andes as a spectacular backdrop. Few live in the jagged heights, which become bitterly cold in winter. ... From Bolivia to Venezuela, though, tropical air produces a transformation, making the high country habitable.”

—Pablo Corral Vega, “In the Shadow of the Andes,” National Geographic, February 2001
Population Patterns

**MAIN Idea** South America’s population has been shaped by ethnic diversity, physical geography, migration, and urban growth.

**GEOGRAPHY AND YOU** What kinds of physical features affect where people in your town live? Read to learn what shapes population patterns in South America.

South America is the world’s fourth-largest continent and is home to a population of more than 373 million people.

**The People**

South America is home to an ethnically diverse population. Today many indigenous cultures inhabit parts of the subregion, especially in rural or more remote areas. Most indigenous groups—of which there are more than 350—live in the Andes region of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The Spanish and Portuguese were the first Europeans in South America. Enslaved Africans were later brought as laborers. After the countries of South America gained their independence, other European groups—French, Dutch, Italians, and Germans—came as well. Immigrants from Asia also arrived in South America. In Guyana, about one-half of the population is of South Asian or Southeast Asian descent. Many people of Chinese descent make their homes in Peru, and many people of Japanese descent live in Brazil, Argentina, and Peru.

**Density and Distribution**

South America’s high rate of population growth magnifies the challenges to settlement already presented by physical geography. The rain forests, deserts, and mountains that dominate South America’s interior discourage human settlement. As a result, most South Americans live on the continent’s edges, an area sometimes called the “populated rim.” The coastal regions provide favorable climates, fertile land, and easy access to transportation systems. To draw people away from the densely populated coast, the Brazilian government in 1960 moved the capital from coastal Rio de Janeiro to Brasília, a planned city built in the country’s interior.

South American countries, with their relatively large land areas, tend to have low population densities. In Ecuador, the most densely populated country in South America, an average of 119 people share a square mile (46 per sq. km). Brazil has a population of more than 184 million, but its enormous land area, about 3.3 million square miles (8.5 million sq. km), results in an average population density of only 56 people per square mile (22 per sq. km).

The search for better wages and living conditions and the desire to escape the violence of civil war motivate many people to leave South America. However, compared with Mexico—which has the largest flow of immigrants to the United States—migration from South America to the United States is low. Some countries, such as Guyana, Ecuador, and Colombia, are experiencing a large brain drain, or the loss of their more highly educated and skilled workers to other countries.
The population in South America has become disproportionately urban because of migration. Today about 80 percent of the subregion’s population is urban. In Argentina and Uruguay, urbanization has been the result of foreign immigration. In the majority of countries, however, urbanization has been the result of internal migration.

Urban Challenges

São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and Buenos Aires in Argentina now rank among the world’s 15 largest urban areas in population. Each of these megacities illustrates the often extreme chasm between rich and poor. Twenty percent of São Paulo, for example, consists of favelas, or slums, most of which are located on the outskirts of the city. In sharp contrast to the favelas are the city’s wealthy neighborhoods, where houses are hidden behind gates or walls. The major challenges in São Paulo and other megacities continue to be housing, employment, maintaining infrastructure, crime, and traffic.

History and Government

Indigenous civilizations, colonization, independence, and authoritarian rule have influenced South America’s history and government.

GEOGRAPHY AND YOU How might valuable minerals and environmental diversity influence the history of a region? Read to learn about the early history of South America and the factors that influenced its settlement.

Native Americans and Europeans contributed to South America’s history and to the creation of modern governments.

Early Cultures

Before the Inca established their empire, other early indigenous groups—such as the Moche, Mapuche, and Aymara—developed societies that were based primarily on agriculture. The Inca later established a highly developed civilization in the Andes. At its height, the Inca Empire stretched from present-day Ecuador to central Chile. The empire was called Tawantinsuyu, which means “the land of the four quarters.” Where the four quarters met, the Inca built their capital, Cuzco, in what is now Peru.

The Inca ruled through a central government headed by an emperor. In their hierarchical society, the emperor, high priest, and army commander exercised complete authority over all other classes. Among the lowest classes were farmers, artisans, and laborers.

The Inca were skilled engineers, building temples and fortresses, and laying out a network of roads that crossed mountain passes and penetrated forests. Inca farmers cut terraces into the slopes of the Andes and built irrigation systems. With no written language, knowledge was passed on to each generation through storytelling. To keep financial and historical records, the Inca used a quipu (KEE•poo), a series of knotted cords of various colors and lengths.

Vast mineral resources of silver and gold provided the Inca with their great wealth. It was this wealth, however, that led Spanish conquistadors to the shores of Peru. The network of Inca roads helped the Spanish conquer the immense empire.
European Conquests

From the Spanish territory of Panama, conquistador Francisco Pizarro sailed for Peru. By 1535 the Inca had been weakened by civil war and Pizarro and the Spanish were able to destroy the Inca Empire. From Peru, Spanish conquistadors expanded into Colombia, Argentina, and Chile. The Portuguese settled on the coast of Brazil, while the British, French, and Dutch settled in parts of northern South America.

As in other European-ruled territories, the conquerors set up highly structured political systems. Territories were part of the viceroyalties of New Granada, Peru, La Plata, and Brazil. In both Spanish and Portuguese colonies, the Roman Catholic Church became the unifying institution.

The European colonies became sources of wealth for the home countries. Some Spanish settlers prospered from the mining of gold and silver. The Portuguese discovered precious metals in Brazil and made use of brazilwood, a tree used to make red dye. On their plantations, the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch grew coffee, sugarcane, and cotton for export to Europe.

Epidemic diseases imported by the Europeans and the hardships of working on colonial plantations drastically reduced the Native American population. To meet the labor shortage, European colonists imported enslaved Africans. In the Dutch colony of Suriname, for example, enslaved Africans comprised the majority of the population until the mid-nineteenth century.

Independence

Encouraged by the French and American Revolutions and the struggles for independence in Mexico and the Caribbean, the countries of South America also sought their independence from colonial rule. By the mid-1800s, most had achieved their goal under such leaders as Simón Bolívar of Venezuela and José de San Martín of Argentina. Only Brazil became independent without a violent upheaval. Suriname did not gain its independence from the Netherlands until 1975. French Guiana remains a part of France today, although public opinion reflects its ongoing struggle for independence.

The postcolonial period was politically and economically unstable for the newly independent countries of South America. They lacked the tradition of self-government. And despite written constitutions, power remained in the hands of the elite. With military backing, caudillos throughout South America seized power—often forcibly and illegally.

1. Regions Why are Colombia’s paramilitary and insurgent groups not perceived as a threat to the government?

2. Place Of the countries shown on the map, which has experienced the longest period of electoral democracy?
Movements for Change

Dictatorships gave way to democratically elected governments in some countries. Today, however, these countries are struggling to end corrupt politics and violence, address the gap between the rich and poor, create jobs, and strengthen the rights of indigenous groups. South Americans have expressed their demands for change through their right to vote. In 2006, for example, the people of Chile elected their first female president, Michelle Bachelet. Bolivians elected Evo Morales, an Aymara Indian, as their first indigenous president. Morales promises to fight corruption, tax the wealthy, and increase the rights of indigenous peoples. A Bolivian man, Don Gregorio, described the significance of Morales’s victory in Bolivia:

“It’s the time of the Indian. . . . We’ll see how it goes but I think things are going to get better.”


Culture

MAIN Idea  The culture of South America has been influenced by the arts, traditions, and beliefs of indigenous peoples, Europeans, and Africans.

GEOGRAPHY AND YOU  What geographic features in South America might serve to isolate cultures from one another? Read to learn about the factors that influence culture in the subregion.

In South America—one of the world’s most culturally diverse areas—aspects of culture can be found everywhere, from an isolated village to a bustling city.

Language and Religion

Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and French are each spoken in different parts of the subregion. Many people in South America are also bilingual. During colonial rule, some European languages blended with Native American languages to form completely new languages. Many Native American languages have survived throughout South America and are still spoken today.

The majority of South Americans are Roman Catholic, but tens of millions of people practice mixed religions, such as Macumba and Candomblé, which combine West African religions with Roman Catholicism. Other religions practiced include Protestant Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Islam, Judaism, and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Education and Health Care

Education varies greatly throughout South America. Many countries have devoted more funds to public schools, and literacy rates have risen steadily. Some public universities provide higher education at little or no cost to students. In other countries education is considered a luxury among the poor, and many children drop out of school to help support their families.

In countries with stable economies and high standards of living, people have access to better health care and live longer, healthier lives. Health concerns linked to poverty, lack of sanitation, infectious diseases, and malnutrition, however, continue to exist in the rural or more remote areas of South America. These concerns also exist in the slums on the outskirts of large cities where millions of people live in the overcrowded favelas.
The Arts

Native American arts survive in many different forms. The massive buildings of the ancient Inca at Cuzco and Machu Picchu reveal a mastery of stone and engineering that is still studied today. Traditional arts and crafts dating before the arrival of the Europeans—such as weaving, ceramics, and metalworking—have been passed from generation to generation and continue today. Music also has ancient ties. Panpipes are one of the most common pre-Columbian musical instruments from the Andean region. Musical traditions later mixed Native American, African, and European influences to create unique styles, including the Brazilian samba and the Argentine tango.

During colonial times, Spanish art forms inspired painting and architecture in South America. Roman Catholic churches built in Spanish and Portuguese designs still stand. Their architectural style was often enlivened by color and details added by Native American and African artists. Today, Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer is known for the modern buildings of Brasília.

Many South American writers have won international recognition. Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez blends everyday reality with the mythical and fantastic. Chilean poets Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Family Life and Leisure

In urban upper and middle classes, the family is more likely to consist of a nuclear household—father, mother, and dependent children—rather than an extended family. Loyalty and responsibility toward the extended family, however, remain very strong. The compadre relationship is also valued, yet changes brought about by urban society have diminished its importance in some places.

People are passionate about soccer in South America. Other popular sports include polo, auto racing, tennis, boxing, and basketball. Social life and leisure time revolve around family visits, patriotic events, religious feast days, and festivals. Carnival, celebrated in the week before the Roman Catholic observance of Lent, is a 40-day period of fasting and prayer before Easter. People from around the world come to Rio de Janeiro, home of one of the largest Carnival celebrations.

**Vocabulary**

1. Explain the significance of: brain drain, quipu.

**Main Ideas**

2. Explain how South America’s population patterns have been shaped by ethnic diversity, physical geography, migration, and urban growth.

3. What has caused the population of South America to become disproportionately urban?

4. Describe how each of the following factors influenced history and government in South America: indigenous civilizations, colonization, independence, and authoritarian rule.

5. Using a chart like the one below, list the influences that contributed to cultural aspects of South America. Describe two influences for each aspect of South American culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influences</th>
<th>Aspects of Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Critical Thinking**

6. How has physical geography influenced the culture of South America? Give an example.

7. **Making Generalizations** On an outline map, label the countries of South America. What factors do you think determine their political boundaries?

8. **Analyzing Visuals** Review the population density map on page 228. What generalization can you make about population density in Brazil? In Argentina?

**Writing About Geography**

9. **Descriptive Writing** Suppose you live in a rural area of South America. Write a letter to your parents, expressing your desire to attend college in Rio de Janeiro. Describe opportunities and challenges you will face.

For additional resources, visit glencoe.com and click on Study Central.
**URBANIZATION AND MIGRATION**

- Latin America is becoming more and more urbanized as people migrate to the cities looking for better wages and living conditions, or to escape violence.
- Because of the urbanization, Latin America has some megacities and some primate cities.
- Some Latin Americans migrate to other countries. Often these are the most well-educated citizens. This drains the countries of important human resources.

**HISTORY AND COLONIZATION**

- The first people in the region probably came from Asia over 40,000 years ago.
- They developed advanced cultures, and were skilled in mathematics, astronomy, and agriculture.
- Spanish and Portuguese explorers came to Latin America in the 1500s and colonized the region, extracting rich resources.
- In addition to gold and silver, plants, animals, and diseases were traded between the Americas and Europe. This is known as the Columbian Exchange.

**MOVING FORWARD**

- Latin American countries began gaining their independence in the 1800s.
- Most of the countries gained independence through violent means. The violence disrupted economies and led to instability in the region.
- Today most Latin American countries are democratic, and citizens are working to stop corruption.
- Although the countries revolted against the Europeans, many legacies of colonization still remain. Most Latin Americans are Roman Catholic, and speak a European language.
Problem:
The countries of South America need an efficient, accessible, and cost-effective communications network to connect the residents of the region. A lack of such services contributes to under-development in parts of the region.

Inefficient and Costly
It takes great time and effort to construct the poles and lines necessary to provide landline telephone service. There is added expense involved in keeping these networks in working order.

Lack of Services
Before the explosion of cell phone technology, communications capabilities were limited in many South American countries. This man, living in Ecuador, sells the use of his working telephone to neighbors and passersby.
Solution:

Much of South America, like many parts of Africa and Asia, has turned to cell phone technology to enhance the region’s communications capabilities.

Connecting People

Establishing communications networks such as landline telephone services has long been a problem in South America. The rugged terrain, remote villages, and cost contribute to the region’s limited access. Since the early 1990s, the number of Latin American households with cell phones has increased over 1300 percent, helping to connect the region’s countries to each other and to the rest of the world.

**Why has the construction been slow?** The infrastructure needed to provide traditional landline service take a lot of time, money, and labor to construct. The geography of the region makes this construction time-consuming and costly particularly in remote areas. Residents in these areas often have little to no phone access at all.

**What are the reasons for cell phone popularity?** Cell towers can be constructed in remote areas more easily than landlines, allowing the residents in these areas to be better connected. The start-up costs are much less. Access to landline phone service, if available, costs between $50 to $200 in start-up fees. Economically this is out of the reach of many people. Cell phone providers offer service quickly and for a lower cost.

**How do users control cost?** Although the start-up fees associated with cell phones are less than the cost of regular phone service, the service does come with monthly fees. Increased usage and competition between cell phone providers have helped to bring these charges down, but they are still often too costly for many residents. To keep expenses manageable, most South American residents choose to prepay for service. Additional measures such as calling-party-pays (CPP) billing systems are also used.

**THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY**

1. **Human Systems** How might the increased communications network offered by cell phones affect the economy of remote areas?

2. **The World in Spatial Terms** How might the physical geography of South America account for the greater number of cellular connections?
Reviewing Vocabulary

Directions: Choose the word or words that best complete the sentence.

1. People who are descendants of a region’s first inhabitants are ________ people.
   A ruling
   B religious
   C indigenous
   D conquering

2. To increase their farmland, Aztec farmers built “floating” fields called ________.
   A syncretism
   B chinampas
   C caudillo
   D pyramids

3. A form of a language that is unique to a particular place is a ________.
   A vocabulary
   B grammar
   C dialect
   D lingua franca

4. The loss of the most educated people of a country through emigration is called ________.
   A immigration
   B illegal migration
   C refugees
   D a brain drain

Reviewing Main Ideas

Directions: Choose the best answers to the following questions.

Section 1 (pp. 216–220)

5. People of mixed Native American and Spanish ancestry are called ________.
   A Aztec
   B Maya
   C native peoples
   D mestizos

Section 2 (pp. 221–226)

6. With small areas and rapidly growing populations, ________ contain(s) some of the most densely populated countries of Latin America.
   A Central America
   B Yucatán
   C the Andes
   D the Caribbean islands

Section 3 (pp. 227–232)

7. Where does most of the population of South America live?
   A in the Andes
   B in the Amazon Basin
   C near the coast
   D in southern Argentina
Critical Thinking

Directions: Choose the best answers to the following questions.

8. Why has urbanization been a major challenge for Latin American countries?
   A Large numbers of people have moved to cities looking for better jobs.
   B Countries have suffered a brain drain.
   C Caudillos ruled Mexico for many years after independence.
   D The Aztec, Maya, and Inca had highly developed civilizations.

Base your answer to question 9 on the map and on your knowledge of Chapter 9.

9. Which language is dominant in most South American countries?
   A Spanish
   B Portuguese
   C English
   D Dutch

Document-Based Questions

Directions: Analyze the document and answer the short-answer questions that follow the document.

Bernal Díaz served with conquistador Hernán Cortés. Here is his description of their arrival in what is today Mexico City.

. . . we came to a broad causeway and continued our march towards Iztapalapa. And when we saw all those cities and villages built in the water, and other great towns on dry land, and that straight and level causeway leading to Mexico [City], we were astounded. These great towns . . . and buildings rising from the water, all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision from the tale of Amadis. Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream . . . .

And when we entered the city of Iztapalapa, the sight of the palaces in which they lodged us! They were very spacious and well built, of magnificent stone, cedar wood, and the wood of other sweet-smelling trees, with great rooms and courts, which were a wonderful sight, and all covered with awnings of woven cotton.

When we had taken a good look at all this, we went to the orchard and garden, which was a marvelous place both to see and to walk in . . . Another remarkable thing was that large canoes could come into the gardens from the lake, through a channel they had cut, and their crews did not have to disembark. Everything was shining with lime and decorated with different kinds of stonework and paintings which were a marvel to gaze on. . . .

—Bernal Diaz, The Conquest of New Spain

10. Based on the description provided by Díaz, how would you describe the level of civilization of the Native Americans in Mexico?

Extended Response

11. Compare the culture of Mexico to that of Central America and the Caribbean. How are the cultures similar? How are they different?
CONNECTING TO

THE UNITED STATES

Just the Facts:

• Most Hispanic Americans, also called Latinos, are of Latin American descent.
• In the United States, Spanish speakers number over 35 million.
• Latinos are the fastest-growing minority and the largest—13% of the U.S. population.
• About 90% of Latinos live in urban areas.
• The spending power of Latinos in the United States has increased by 118% in the past decade.
• American corporations are hiring bilingual employees to reach Spanish-speaking consumers.
Latinos living in the United States have kept many of their traditions, which have influenced U.S. culture.

**Food—You Are What You Eat**

Mexican food has become so popular in the United States that you are just as likely to order a taco or burrito for lunch as you are a cheeseburger or pizza. Many restaurant chains offer Mexican-inspired cuisine. The most authentic restaurants are often owned and operated by Latinos. They serve items such as enchiladas, burritos, tamales, and salsa.

Chocolate, a favorite sweet throughout the world, has its origins in Latin America. Chocolate is made from the cacao bean that is indigenous to Mexico and Central America. Discovered by the Aztec and the Maya, chocolate was first used in drinks and spicy sauces.

**Arts and Entertainment**

Latin music has increased in popularity as immigration from Latin America to the United States has increased. Artists such as Shakira and Marc Anthony have had widespread success in the United States. Perhaps the most successful has been Ricky Martin, with over 10.5 million CDs sold in the U.S. alone.

**Holidays—Fiesta Forever**

Cinco de Mayo, a minor holiday in Mexico, has become a major celebration in many U.S. cities. Denver hosts the largest Cinco de Mayo celebration in the United States with parades, exhibits, mariachi music, dancing, and food. Miami, Chicago, and New York host Cuban and Puerto Rican festivals.

**You Already Speak Spanish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amarillo</td>
<td>yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boca Raton</td>
<td>mouse bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>red colored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>flowery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>ash tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>the meadows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montaña</td>
<td>mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>snowcapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palo Alto</td>
<td>high pole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>rich port</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THINKING GEOGRAPHICALLY**

1. **The World in Spatial Terms** Use the graph and the map to interpret the Hispanic settlement of the United States.

2. **Human Systems** Describe the economic impact of the growing Latino population in the United States.